

## **Daily Health Screening and Handling a Case of COVID-19 in Child Care: What Child Care Operators Need to Know**

Child care program operators can play an important role in helping New York City (NYC) slow the spread of COVID-19 by quickly addressing cases of COVID-19 in their programs. This guide includes frequently asked questions and a model health screening tool.

Please refer to New York State COVID-19 child care program [requirements](#) and the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene’s Child Care [Reopening FAQ](#) and [Checklist](#) for additional information regarding physical distancing, face coverings, hygiene, cleaning and disinfection, and other topics.

**Contact your NYC Health Department Bureau of Child Care [Borough Office](#) with any questions or to report a suspected COVID-19 case.**

### **How will I know that a staff member or child in my program has COVID-19 or has been identified as a close contact of someone who has COVID-19?**

Program staff and children must be screened daily prior to entering the child care program. Staff and parents/guardians must notify you if they/their children test positive for COVID-19, are identified as a close contact of someone who has COVID-19, or develop symptoms of COVID-19, at any time including outside child care hours.

- Review the NYC Health Department model health screening tool at the end of this guide and tailor it to your setting.
- Train staff and parents/guardians to use the health screening tool in the morning before leaving home and about how to notify you if they answer “yes” to any of the questions.
- Ensure staff and families that medical information will be kept confidential.
- Call parents/guardians if a child is absent to learn whether the child has COVID-19.
- Provide parents/guardians with the Child Care Programs and COVID-19: What Parents and Guardians Need to Know FAQ so they know what to expect.

You may also learn of a confirmed case from the NYC Health Department.

### **How should I conduct daily health screenings?**

Use the sample screening tool at the end of this guide in the way that makes sense for your child care program. Ideas for screening include:

- Call staff and families before they leave home to ask the screening questions.
- Set up an automated phone line that allows staff and families to indicate yes/no and have someone monitor the line to ensure compliance.

- Issue an auto-generated email or survey that enables a response.
- If screening from home is not feasible, designate a screening area and distribute the screening questions on paper to staff, children, parents/guardians, and any other person who enters the child care program when they arrive to the program. If written forms are used, they should not identify the individual by name.

**What safety protocols are required if screening is conducted on-site at the child care program?**

- Staff, children, parents/guardians, and any other person seeking entry to the child care program must maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others while awaiting screening.
- Screeners and screened individuals (except for children two years of age and under) must wear face coverings if they can medically tolerate them. If the person being screened cannot medically tolerate a face covering, the child care program should consider a reasonable accommodation such as having the individual complete a written screening survey rather than an in-person screening.
- Screen in a location that is not a confined space (for example, do not use a small office with a closed door). If possible, perform screenings outdoors.
- Design a way to screen that prevents others from hearing what is being said and to minimize others from observing screenings.
- Incorporate physical distancing (maintaining at least 6 feet between screeners and others) or physical barriers to minimize the screener’s and screened individual’s exposure during the screening.

**Should we take temperatures as part of the daily health screening? What safety protocols are required?**

Child care programs are not required to check temperatures. If you decide to conduct temperature checks:

- Use a non-contact thermometer (such as an infrared forehead thermometer or infrared scanner). Do not use oral (inserted into the mouth) or tympanic (inserted into the ear) thermometers.
- The person using the non-contact thermometer should strictly follow the manufacturer’s instructions for use. Additional guidance regarding use of non-contact infrared thermometers can be found [here](#) or at [fda.gov](https://www.fda.gov) (search for “non-contact thermometer”).
- When non-contact thermometers are used and the screener does not have physical contact with the screened individual, gloves do not need to be changed before the next check.
- Screening areas should have a supply of alcohol wipes to sanitize equipment that inadvertently touches someone. Clean after each person is screened if there is contact.

**What happens if a staff member or child in my program has COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19?**

- If a person in your program has tested positive for COVID-19, they cannot attend child care until all the following are true:
  - It has been at least 10 days since their symptoms started

- They have not had a fever for the last 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication
- Their overall illness has improved
- If the person never had symptoms, they must stay out for 10 days from the date that the specimen was obtained for their positive COVID-19 test.
- Anyone with symptoms cannot attend child care. If the person had symptoms and their test results comes back negative, they can return to the child care program after they have not had a fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications. The negative test result must be a lab-confirmed diagnostic test. (Not sure if your test is lab-confirmed? Ask the health care provider performing your test!)
- If COVID-19 has been confirmed by a diagnostic laboratory test (nose or throat swab, saliva), all “close contacts” of that person must quarantine and cannot attend child care for 14 days after their last contact with the infectious person. A “close contact” is a person who has been within 6 feet of a person with COVID-19 for at least 10 minutes. For a child care program this will likely mean, at a minimum, all children and the teacher in one classroom or home care setting.

### **How will I know if a staff or child has received a positive COVID-19 diagnostic test?**

The NYC Health Department will let you know when a person who has identified as being a staff or attendee at your program has a positive diagnostic test for COVID-19. You may hear from the NYC Health Department even before your staff member or the child’s parents/guardians notify you. If you hear first from staff or families, contact your Bureau of Child Care [Borough Office](#) to report the case, and the NYC Health Department will follow up with you to let you know whether the person is a confirmed case and, if yes, regarding next steps.

### **While the person is waiting for their test results can they attend the child care program?**

A person who has had symptoms of COVID-19 within the last 10 days, must stay home while they wait for their test results. If the individual has been told to quarantine because they have been identified as a close contact or because of recent travel, they must stay home for the full 14 days.

### **If I learn that a staff member or child has a positive COVID-19 diagnostic test, what should I do?**

Take these steps immediately:

- Contact your Bureau of Child Care [Borough Office](#).
- The NYC Health Department will determine the person’s likely “infectious period,” which is the time period when they can spread the virus, to determine whether the child or staff attended your facility during the infectious period.
- If the NYC Health Department determines that the person was **not** in your program during their infectious period, unless they direct you otherwise, there is nothing else to do.
- If the NYC Health Department determines that the person **was** in your program during their infectious period, they will work with you to identify everyone who could have been a close contact (within 6 feet for at least 10 minutes) of the person in your program during their infectious period.

- All staff and children in the same group as the person with COVID-19 are likely close contacts.
- Depending on your programming, there may be other close contacts. For example, if children or teachers move between groups, there may be close contacts in these other classes or groups.
- The NYC Health Department will provide a template letter for you to notify all identified close contacts (staff members and parents/guardians of children) to tell them that they/their children were exposed to COVID-19 and need to stay home (quarantine) for 14 days from the date they were last exposed (if they develop symptoms during this time, they will need to isolate).
  - They may not enter **ANY** child care program during the quarantine period.
  - If children or staff are already on site, follow your existing isolation protocol, contact children’s parents/guardians for immediate pick-up, and send staff who are close contacts home.
- Report the information to your Bureau of Child Care [Borough Office](#) if they are not already aware.

**Note:** If your program has a contract with the NYC Department of Education (DOE), you must immediately notify the DOE Division of Early Childhood Education of any positive COVID-19 test results at your program, including in any non-contracted classrooms at the same location.

**Should I provide a letter to staff and parents/guardians of children who were *not* close contacts?**

You are strongly encouraged to inform people who were not close contacts that there was a person with COVID-19 at your program, without compromising the confidentiality of the confirmed case. The NYC Health Department will share a template letter for a child who was not exposed.

**Can I share information about the person with COVID-19 with the families in my program?**

No. You should not reveal the identity of the person with COVID-19 (other than to the NYC Health Department staff assisting in the investigation) or share information about the person with COVID-19. That information is confidential. Maintaining confidentiality will help encourage other people to disclose when they have COVID-19.

**What should I do if a staff member or child has symptoms of COVID-19 but is not a confirmed case? Should I notify families?**

Only confirmed cases require assessment of close contacts and exclusions. You are not required to notify families when someone in the program has symptoms of COVID-19 but the case is not confirmed. If you want to notify families, let them know that:

- The person has symptoms, is not a confirmed case of COVID-19, and is not attending the program for at least 10 days (unless they receive a negative lab-confirmed test result, as described above).
- Their child may continue to attend the child care program.
- If they are concerned, they should talk to their health care provider.

- The symptoms of COVID-19 are very nonspecific, and are often similar to other respiratory viral infections, including flu.

### **What should I do if learn during non-business hours that a staff or child has COVID-19?**

If a staff member or parent/guardian notifies you that they have COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19 during non-business hours:

- Remind the staff member or parent/guardian that they/their child cannot enter the child care program for at least 10 days and that should isolate at home.
- During business hours (Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.), contact your Bureau of Child Care [Borough Office](#); during all other times, call **866-692-3641**. The NYC Health Department will investigate whether the person is a confirmed case of COVID-19 and contact you to let you know. If the case is confirmed, the NYC Health Department will work with you to identify close contacts who must be excluded.

### **What if there are multiple cases of COVID-19 in my program at the same time?**

If there are two or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 in different classrooms, you are strongly encouraged to follow the [protocol](#) of the NYC Department of Education.

### **Where can I find information about COVID-19 testing to provide to my staff and families?**

Provide your staff and families with information about [COVID-19 testing](#) and remind them to let you know as soon as they receive any positive results. Testing is free at many locations for all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status.

### **Do I need to do any special cleaning or disinfection in the areas the person with COVID-19 used while in their infectious period?**

Close off areas used by the person confirmed to have COVID-19 and follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines on [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#).

### **What if someone in my program has had an antibody test?**

A positive or negative antibody test result should not be used to make any decisions about whether someone can work or attend the facility. Antibody tests for COVID-19 cannot be used to detect whether someone is currently sick or infected. It is also not yet known whether a positive antibody test means that someone is protected from getting COVID-19 again.

## Sample Health Screening for Child Care Programs

***For daily screening of all people (staff, children, parents/guardians, and others) who seek to enter the child care program. Screening should be done prior to leaving home if possible.***

1. Have you experienced a fever, a new cough, new loss of taste or smell, or shortness of breath within the past 10 days?
  - No.  
*Go to the next question.*
  - Yes.  
*No further screening is needed. You may not enter the child care program.*  
***Parents/guardians must notify the child care program.***
  
2. In the past 10 days, have you tested positive for COVID-19 using a test that tested saliva or used a nose or throat swab (not a blood test)? (10 days measured from the date you were tested, not the date you received the test result.)
  - No.  
*Go to the next question.*
  - Yes.  
*No further screening is needed. You may not enter the child care program.*  
***Parents/guardians must notify the child care program.***
  
3. To the best of your knowledge, in the past 14 days, have you been in close contact (within 6 feet for at least 10 minutes) with anyone while they had COVID-19?
  - No.  
*Go to the next question.*
  - Yes.  
*No further screening is needed. You may not enter the child care program.*  
***Parents/guardians must notify the child care program.***
  
4. In the past 14 days, have you traveled internationally or returned from a state that was identified by New York State as having widespread community transmission of COVID-19 (other than just passing through the restricted state for less than 24 hours)? (Visit <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-travel-advisory> for applicable states.)
  - No.  
*You may enter to the child care program.*
  - Yes.  
*No further screening is needed. You may not enter the child care program.*